

Implement and Facilitate

Establish a Positive Learning Environment

Tips and tricks to improve your training

CREATE A SAFE HAVEN FOR LEARNING

Some learners may arrive excited about the training. Others may think that training is punishment, and others may bring burdens with them. You can create a safe haven. Here are some ideas:

- Be prepared early enough to greet participants at the door, welcome them, learn their names, and allow time for them to tell you something about themselves.
- Share the objectives of the training early, prior to the session if possible.
- Let participants know how they will benefit from the information.
- Demonstrate your respect for each individual.
- Add whimsy to pique curiosity, and add a smile; for example, use crayons, clay, or brightly colored sticky notes.
- Use names and sincere reinforcement to build rapport.

CREATE A COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Arrive in a training room early enough to make it yours so that you can welcome the learners as your guests. To create a comfortable environment, consider these ideas:

- Make sure that lighting is bright. It's depressing to walk into a ballroom when the lights are dimmed.
- Learn how to adjust the thermostat to the level that is most comfortable for the majority of the participants. Remember that you will never please everyone all the time. Do your best.
- Ensure that the environment feels comfortable. Hide empty boxes, straighten chairs, and place materials neatly at each seat. When the room is in order, people feel that you took the time and trouble to prepare for them.
- Ensure that you and your visuals can be seen and heard by all learners. Try it out.
- Have coffee ready in the morning, and plan for ample breaks.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Active and ample participation is the most important thing you can encourage to enhance learning. Here are a couple of thoughts to get you started:

- Use small breakout groups to overcome early reluctance to share ideas or concerns.
- Use body language to encourage participation; positive nods, smiles, and eye contact all show that you are interested in others' ideas.
- Share something about yourself to begin a trusted exchange of ideas.
- Learn techniques to get learners to open up.

FACILITATE MORE THAN YOU PRESENT

A straight lecturette is rarely required, perhaps only when rules or laws must be imparted word for word.

Facilitating, rather than lecturing, usually enhances learning for everyone. Here are some ideas:

- Create discussion. Not just between you and the learners, but among the learners.
- Get opinions and ideas out in the open before you deliver your message. You may be surprised at how much training the learners can do for you.
- Provide opportunities for participants to evaluate their own learning throughout the session.
- Create experiential learning activities in which the learners discover their own "aha!" moments.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO TRACK THEIR OWN PROGRESS

Tracking progress means celebrating success, overcoming obstacles, and deciding next steps.

Plan for ways participants can do this:

- Create individual checkpoints in the program.



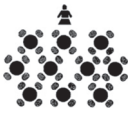



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Establish a Positive Learning Environment *continued*

- Build in group review of learning.
- Encourage participants to identify barriers to the learning.
- Pair individuals as sounding boards for one another.
- Plan celebrations: distributing certificates, team applauses, or “moments in the sun.”

Room Set-Up Your room setup also establishes a positive learning environment. What are you trying to accomplish in your training session? Are you trying to build teams, build one large team, or interject cooperation?

Listed below are several seating arrangements. Can you think of a specific time when you might use each one during the training sessions that you currently conduct?

ARRANGEMENT	GROUP SIZE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
U-Shaped 	12–22	Encourages large group discussion; builds the larger team; encourages close contact with participants	If a small room, may be difficult to work with those on the other side; linear layout makes eye contact among participants difficult
V-Shaped (V points to front) 	Teams of 4–5 and groups of 16–25	Easy to work in table teams; no one's back is entirely facing back of room; best alternative using rectangular tables	Some difficulty to promote teamwork among the entire group
Clusters 	16–50	Promotes teamwork in each cluster; everyone faces the front if chairs are on one side only	Difficult to get participation from those who face the back; some participants may need to move chairs to face the front
Single Round/Square 	8–12	Facilitates problem solving; smaller size promotes total involvement; easy for trainer to step out of the action	Media and visual use is difficult; limited group size
Conference 	8–12	Moderate communication among group	Maintains trainer as lead; sense of formality; inability for trainer to get close to participants
Classroom 	Any size	Traditional, may be expected by learners; trainer controls; participants can view visuals	Low involvement; one-way communication; difficult to form small groups

Presenting a Dynamic Delivery

A quote that should guide your presentations is, "A good speech is less about what they say, and all about what we hear and what we see." You could be delivering fascinating information, but if you are using a monotone voice, including lots of fillers, and playing with your marker, it will be almost impossible for your participants to learn.

USE NOTES TO KEEP YOUR DELIVERY ORGANIZED

Notes should be considered as a guide to keep you on track and on time. How can you use notes effectively? Here are some thoughts:

- Practice with your notes. They should become a support system that you know well and rely on.
 - Learn to hold your notes comfortably and unobtrusively. You'll need to tape yourself or present in front of a full-length mirror to decide what works for you and how you look best.
 - Use a "speak and peek" process, meaning that you continue to speak while you peek briefly at your notes.
 - Don't fold or staple your notes. Folding weakens the paper and makes the pages prone to flop over as you are holding them. A staple prevents your flexibility. In addition, you'll appear more professional if you do not need to flip the page over as if you are holding some long bill of lading.
 - Be sure the pages are clearly numbered so that they are easy to put back in order.
 - Find ways to cue yourself about where to look for specific information on your notes. Possibilities include highlighting, underlining, and using a different color of marker or font.
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Lectures

Lecturettes are short spurts of information, generally interspersed with humor and short activities. Although you will often use activities to maximize participation, there are still times when you must deliver information.

INCREASE PARTICIPATION—EVEN WHEN YOU LECTURE!

Try some of these suggestions to encourage participation, even when you must deliver information:

- Design pop quizzes in the middle of the lecturette.
- Ask questions about predictions or recall of information.
- Create a conversation between the trainer and the participants.
- Intersperse demonstrations.
- Develop a page of guided note taking in the form of questions or fill in the blanks.
- Develop key word outlines of the presentation, leaving room to add additional ideas.
- Use visuals to go with the lecturette, so participants can follow your words visually.
- Stop at several points along the way to ask if everyone is with you.
- Design a partial story at the beginning and complete the story at the end of the lecturette.
- Find ways to interject humor, such as creating a cartoon to match the content.

Presentation Tools Demonstration

Take a few minutes to think about all the things that can become a problem with one of these audiovisual tools and what can you do to mitigate these issues:

- LCD projector
 - whiteboard
 - flipchart
 - participant handouts
 - DVD/CD player
 - other.
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Do You Get Nervous?

Nervousness is nothing more than a fear reflex. It is natural, and it occurs because your body is getting ready for fight or flight. Nervousness may be displayed in numerous ways: pacing or swaying, fidgeting with a pen, jingling change in your pocket, perspiring, shaking, clearing your throat, grimacing, tenseness, and dozens of other things. Nevertheless, if you have interesting content, your participants will never notice that you are nervous.

The number one rule regarding nervousness is, "Do not tell your participants that you are nervous." If you don't tell them, chances are your participants will never know! Here are some tips to address your nervousness:

- Recognize that you will be nervous. Know your signs of nervousness and then say, "Oh there it is—that butterfly in my stomach. That's my nervous signal." Then move on.
- Find the best way to relax before you begin. It might be a couple of head or shoulder rolls, a few isometric exercises, or deep breathing. Do what works best for you.
- Arrive early, to take ownership of the training room. When your "guests" arrive, it will be as if you are on your home field.
- Wear clothes that you feel great in. Avoid a new suit, new shoes, or a new haircut.
- Organize yourself. In fact, put your organizational skills into overdrive. It will relax you to know that everything is where it belongs and is ready to go.
- Got a security blanket? Use it. Maybe it is a glass of water. Besides, the water is handy for a dry throat or when you need a pause to remember what you were saying!
- Tell yourself that your participants want you to succeed. Send yourself positive messages, "I've got this covered! It's going to be grrreeaaat!"
- Get participants involved early. You could ask a question, start a discussion, or organize an activity. After that, it will feel more like a two-way conversation.

Remember that even if you are nervous, your participants will rarely notice it unless you tell them, and then they will start looking for the signs. If you focus on your participants and their needs, you take the attention away from yourself and get over the butterflies fluttering in your stomach sooner. Remember that nervousness is natural. Try the techniques listed below to address specific nervous symptoms.

IDEAS FOR SPECIFIC NERVOUS SYMPTOMS

These ideas do not remove the nervousness, but they may mask it or provide you with a temporary crutch:

Shakiness	Stand near a table and use it as a touchstone; avoid caffeine.
Moving/swaying	Plant your feet a full shoulder's width apart.
Trembling legs	Don't try to control; isolate the muscles and shake out before you begin.
Sweaty palms	Try talc or antiperspirant (experiment with it first).
Squeaky voice	No iced beverages; try lemon and honey in warm decaffeinated tea.
	Try "Throat Coat," a commercial tea.
Throat mucus	Lemon in warm tea; avoid dairy products.
Dry throat	Bite on a lemon or use a mouth freshener; have water available.
Fillers	Write a large "UM" on your notes to remind you not to say it; good eye contact.
Facial expressions	Greet people early and think of them as your friends.
Jangle change	Empty your pockets.
Flushed skin	Wear red or darker colors to camouflage it.
Fast pulse rate	Breathe deeply.
Twitching	Experiment between training sessions; try rubbing or tapping area.
Rapid speech	Write a cue to "slow down" on your notes; practice pausing.

What works for you?

The Quandary Queue

Have you ever had one of those days? You know the kind of day where everything goes wrong. You woke up ill, and when you arrived, your equipment did not work. Your participants all seem to be on another planet, their responses are incorrect or out of context, and the method you are using is obviously not working. You spent more time with one section, thereby shortchanging another. You've lost the attention of the group, and now the fire alarm goes off! What do you do?

Think about what quandaries and challenges do you face in the training room, and how do you handle them?

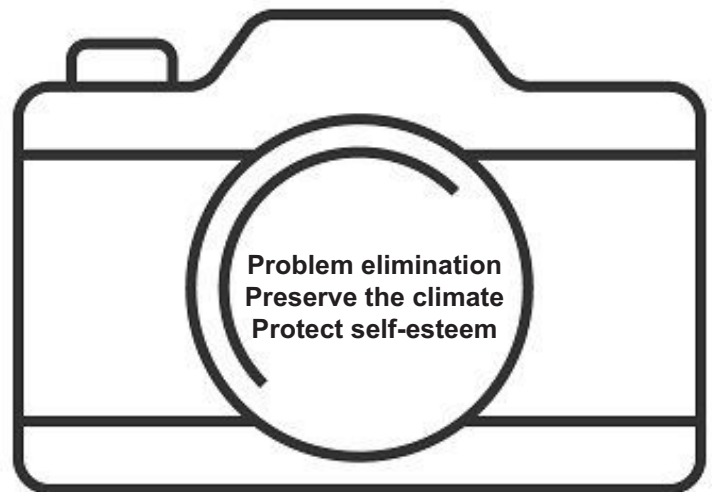
ANY DIFFICULT PARTICIPANTS?

What kinds of difficult or inappropriate behaviors have you addressed? What works?

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Begin by ignoring the behavior.
- Stop the behavior if it is disruptive to others, but keep your cool; don't take it personally.
- These strategies sometimes work:
 - Stop talking until the behavior ends.
 - Use nonverbal cues, such as talking between a side conversation, holding up your hand.
 - Refer to the ground rules if appropriate.
 - Directly ask for the behavior to stop or change.
 - Take a break.
 - Discuss the behavior with the individual at a break.
- Continue to respect the individual; consider that perhaps the participant does not realize that he or she is disruptive.
- Keep the participant involved because you don't want him or her to disengage.
- Maintain the involvement of the rest of the group. They want you to succeed and will judge how you handle the situation.

In Focus: 3P Goal



PREPARE TO PREVENT PROBLEMS

The key to handling difficulties in a training session is preparation and prevention. Unfortunately, no matter how thoroughly you prepare, things will still go wrong. Smile and keep it in perspective.

Questions, Questions, From All Perspectives

GETTING PARTICIPANTS TO ASK QUESTIONS

- Tell participants that you encourage their questions.
- Stop at natural points in your presentation and ask for questions.
- Pause long enough for participants to formulate questions.
- Give signals such as, "Let's pause here so you can ask questions." Then wait for questions.
- Watch facial expressions; if a participant looks puzzled, stop and ask if he or she has a question.
- If two or more participants are talking among themselves, ask if there is something they would like clarified.
- Allow time for participants to ask their questions privately. They may be too shy to ask in front of the group.

TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

- Plan some questions in advance.
- Increase participation by including questions early in the session.
- Know why you are including questions: to create discussion, introduce controversy, correct response, review information, or hear hypothetical comments.
- Keep questions short.
- Know whether you want opinions or information.
- Consider whether it should be an open-ended question.
- If asking a direct question, say the participant's name first, and then ask the question.
- Pause for answers.
- Use follow-up questions to further clarify or expand the initial response.
- Paraphrase responses, especially when the response was not focused.
- Use a round-robin if you want to hear from everyone.

TIPS FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Anticipate participants' questions.
 - Inform participants of your expectations early in the session.
 - Paraphrase questions to ensure that everyone heard and understood the question.
 - Ask for clarification if necessary.
 - Be brief.
 - "I don't know, but I will find out," is a perfectly good response.
 - Redirect questions or encourage other responses from the entire group.
 - If the question is not relevant, invite the participant to discuss it at a break.
 - Avoid showing your feelings to a hostile questioner.
 - Reword hostile questions.
 - Include the entire audience in your response with body position and eye contact.
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How Do You Bring Closure to a Training Session?

An exceptional trainer takes the time to end appropriately.

Opening your training session requires focus; closing your session does, too. Too often training sessions just end. There is a flurry of activity to complete the evaluation, to catch planes, and to get ahead of the rush-hour traffic. Plan your ending as carefully as you plan your opening.

WHAT TO ACCOMPLISH

- Ensure that expectations were met.
- Allow time for individuals to set goals and make final plans.
- Summarize the accomplishments and gain commitment to action.
- Bring closure to the experience with a final group experience.
- Send them off with a final encouraging word or two.

What ideas do you have for implementing these closing steps?

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Finally, stand by the door and say good-bye to each individual. Shake their hands, wish them luck, and offer follow-up, as appropriate. You owe it to your participants to provide the best training session ever. Make it the best it can be from start to finish.

End with a bang—not a fizzle!
